

Applicants : James C. Rush et al  
Serial No. : 09/800,006  
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REMARKS:

Reconsideration of the application as amended is requested.

The Examiner's additional remarks have been received and carefully considered.

Applicants note the Examiner's comment indicating that the allowableness of prior claim 4 has been withdrawn in view of a more extensive review of the Dwilley Patent 5,277,6512. While Applicants disagree with the Examiner's withdrawal of the allowableness of prior claim 4, they do note with appreciation the Examiner's comment that claims 30-44 remain allowable, and that claims 5-22, 28, 29 and 47-50 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form, including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claims 5 and 48 have been cancelled, claims 1,6, 20, 23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 45 and 49 have been amended, and new claims 51-64 have been added. Claim 1 has been amended to include the subject matter of prior claim 5, such that the same, along with dependent claims 6-19 are believed to be in condition for immediate allowance. Prior claim 20 has been rewritten in independent form, and is therefore believed to be in condition for allowance, along with dependent claims 21-28. Similarly, claim 29 has been amended in independent form, and is therefore believed to be in condition for allowance, along with newly added dependent claims 57-64. Claim 45 has been amended to include the subject matter of prior claim 48, and is therefore believed to be in condition for allowance, along with dependent claims 49 and 50.

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Pursuant to 37 CFR 1.121, attached are versions of the amended claims and specification with bracket and underline markings to show those changes made in the present amendment.

The Examiner objected to the drawings under 37 CFR 1.183(a) on the grounds that the "central portion" of the "elongate T-portion" must be shown or the features cancelled from the claims.

Applicants cannot find any reference in the claims to an "elongate T-portion" or the "central portion" thereof. Rather, Applicants have recited in the claims, "an elongate T-shaped central portion", which relates to the beam-to-post connectors. This aspect of the claimed invention is already illustrated in the drawings and discussed in detail in the specification of the pending application. More specifically, in the illustrated embodiment of the present invention, the elongate T-shaped central portion is noted by the reference numeral 60, and is described at page 12, lines 1-22 of the Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments. In the event further clarification is required, the courtesy of a telephone call to the undersigned attorney would be appreciated. Otherwise, Applicants shall assume that the Examiner's objection to the drawings will be withdrawn.

In response to the Examiner's objections to claims 5-22 under 37 CFR 1.75(c), the claims have been amended to place the same in proper dependent form, such that the Examiner's objections are now deemed moot.

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The Examiner rejected claims 1, 5, 23-26 and 45 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by the Dwillies Patent 5,277,512. Claims 1 and 27 were also rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by the Jones Patent 3,513,606. While Applicants believe that these prior rejected claims are patentable over both the cited Dwillies and Jones patents, in view of the claim amendments submitted herewith, these rejections are believed to be moot. Applicants reserve the right to pursue the rejected claims in a continuing application.

All of the claims pending in the present application, with the exception of new claims 51-56, incorporate subject matter which the Examiner has previously deemed allowable, such that these claims are believed to be in condition for immediate allowance.

With respect to new claims 51-56, the same recite a post and beam furniture system, which incorporates beams with slots in the uppermost and lowermost faces, as well as vertical posts which are attached to the beams by beam-to-post connectors. Applicants assert that new claims 51-56 are allowable over the art of record for the same reasons the Examiner deemed the remaining pending claims allowable.


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Applicants believe that all pending claims are now in condition for immediate allowance, and a notice to this effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence, and all identified enclosures and attachments are being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington, D.C. 20231, on

4/22/03

  
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Enclosures

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

The paragraph beginning on page 1, line 12 has been amended to read as follows.

Portable partition systems for open office spaces and other similar settings are well known in the art. Individual partition panels are interconnected in different configurations to form separate offices, workstations and/or work settings. The partition panels are extremely durable and can be readily disassembled and reassembled into alternative configurations to meet the ever-changing needs of the user. Examples of such partition systems are provided in U.S. Patent Nos. 3,822,146; 3,831,330; and 4,144,924, which are owned by Steelcase Development [Inc.] Corporation, the assignee of the present application.

The paragraph beginning on page 1, line 19 has been amended to read as follows.

Post and beam furniture systems have also been developed to divide open plans three dimensionally into individual workstations and/or work settings. Examples of such furniture systems are provided in U.S. Patents 6,003,275; 5,950,371; and 5,889,025, which are also owned by Steelcase Development [Inc.] Corporation, the assignee of present application.

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The paragraph beginning on page 4, line 12 has been amended to read as follows.

The [principle] principal objects of the present invention are to provide a post and beam furniture system that can be quickly and easily installed and reconfigured to efficiently and effectively support the ever-changing needs of the user. The individual posts and beams are equipped with T-shaped slots which define an integrated universal mounting arrangement for detachably interconnecting the posts and beams in alternative configurations, and mounting accessories at a variety of different locations. The furniture system is efficient in use, economical to manufacture, capable of a long operating life and particularly well adapted for the proposed use.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1, 6, 20, 23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 45 and 49 have been amended to read as follows.

-1- (Twice Amended)

A post and beam furniture system for partitioning open office space, and the like, comprising:

a plurality of overhead beams, each having opposite ends;

a plurality of vertical posts, each having a lower portion thereof adapted to be abuttingly supported on a floor surface of the open office space, an upper portion thereof

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adapted to be connected with an associated one of said overhead beams and at least one outwardly extending flange, having an end face with a single vertical slot extending centrally therealong;

a plurality of beam-to-post connectors attached to said opposite ends of said beams, and detachably retained in said slot in said posts for mounting said beams on said posts; and wherein

said slot has a generally T-shaped cross-sectional configuration with an enlarged interior track portion and a reduced neck portion which opens outwardly;

said beam-to-post connectors are shaped to be inserted into an open end of said slot; [and]

*see Fig 2 member 11*

said overhead beams each have an uppermost face with a single horizontal slot extending therealong; and

said overhead beams each have a lowermost face with a single horizontal slot extending centrally therealong.

-6- (Amended)

A furniture system as set forth in claim [5] 1, wherein:

each of said beam-to-post connectors includes:

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an elongate T-shaped central portion attached to one of the ends of an associated one of said beams, and closely received in said slot in said upper portion of an associated one of said posts; and

upper and lower key portions projecting inwardly from said central portion, and being closely received in said slots in said uppermost and lowermost faces of said one beam.

-20- (Amended)

[A furniture system as set forth in claim 1, wherein:] A post and beam furniture system for partitioning open office space, and the like, comprising:  
a plurality of overhead beams, each having opposite ends;  
a plurality of vertical posts, each having a lower portion thereof adapted to be abuttingly supported on a floor surface of the open office space, an upper portion thereof adapted to be connected with an associated one of said overhead beams and at least one outwardly extending flange, having an end face with a single vertical slot extending centrally therealong;  
a plurality of beam-to-post connectors attached to said opposite ends of said beams, and detachably retained in said slot in said posts for mounting said beams on said posts, and wherein



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said overhead beams each have a lowermost face with a single horizontal slot extending centrally therealong; and

said overhead beams each have an uppermost face with a single horizontal slot extending therealong.

-23- (Amended)

A furniture system as set forth in claim [1] 20, wherein:

said posts include at least one X-post having an X-shaped plan configuration defining four mutually perpendicular outwardly extending flanges, each of which has an end face with one of said slots extending centrally therealong.

-24- (Amended)

A furniture system as set forth in claim [1] 20, wherein:

said posts include at least one Y-post having a Y-shaped plan configuration defining three regularly spaced apart, outwardly extending flanges, each of which has an end face with one of said slots extending centrally therealong.

-25- (Amended)

A furniture system as set forth in claim [1] 20, wherein:

each of said beams includes opposite side faces, each of which includes a hanger slot extending longitudinally therealong.

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-27- (Amended)

A furniture system as set forth in claim 20 [1], wherein:

said posts include hollow bases with adjustable leveling feet telescopingly received therein.

-29- (Amended)

[A furniture system as set forth in claim 1, wherein:] A post and beam furniture system for partitioning open office space, and the like, comprising:

a plurality of overhead beams, each having opposite ends;

a plurality of vertical posts, each having a lower portion thereof adapted to be abuttingly supported on a floor surface of the open office space, an upper portion thereof adapted to be connected with an associated one of said overhead beams and at least one outwardly extending flange, having an end face with a single vertical slot extending centrally therealong;

a plurality of beam-to-post connectors attached to said opposite ends of said beams, and detachably retained in said slot in said posts for mounting said beams on said posts; and wherein

each of said beams includes integrally formed bosses with open ends at the opposite ends of said beams; and including

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fasteners extending laterally through said beam-to-post connectors and retained in the open ends of said bosses to detachably mount said beam-to-post connectors to the opposite ends of said beams.

-45- (Twice Amended)

In post and beam furniture systems of the type having a plurality of overhead beams, and a plurality of vertical posts, each having a lower portion thereof adapted to be abuttingly supported on a floor surface of the open office space, and an upper portion thereof adapted to be connected with an associated one of said overhead beams, the improvement comprising:

at least one X-post having an X-shaped plan configuration defining four mutually perpendicular, outwardly extending flanges, each of which has an end face with a single vertical slot extending centrally therealong for detachably interconnecting said posts and said beams in alternative configurations, and for mounting accessories at a variety of different locations; and wherein

each said slot has a generally T-shaped cross-sectional configuration with an enlarged interior track portion and a reduced neck portion which opens outwardly; [and]

said overhead beams each have a lowermost face with a single horizontal slot extending centrally therealong[.]; and wherein

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said overhead beams each have an uppermost face with a single horizontal slot  
extending therealong.

-49- (Amended)

A furniture system as set forth in claim [48] 45, wherein:

each of said beams includes opposite side faces, each of which includes a  
hanger slot extending longitudinally therealong.